

(12)
SOME PARTICULARS
OF THE
LIFE and DEATH
OF

Jonathan Britain,

Who was executed in *BRISTOL*,

For **F O R G E R Y**,

On **FRIDAY** *May* 15, 1772.

By a **GENTLEMAN** who attended him.

With a **PREFACE** by the

Rev. Mr. **ROUQUET**.

My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord: For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts. Isaiah lv. 8, 9.

B R I S T O L :

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☞ The profits arising from the sale of this Pamphlet, will be applied to the benefit of his orphan daughter.



To the READER.

I Think myself very happy upon this occasion, to bear testimony to the truth of the following sheets.—The *candid* Reader will rejoice with me to observe the *striking evidences*, which BRITAIN gave of the *truth* of his repentance, and the *reality* of his conversion to GOD.—He was not of those who merely cry, LORD! LORD! Nor was he *barren and unfruitful* in the knowledge of CHRIST.—He drew not near to GOD with his *lips* only. His *soul* was *contrite*, and his *heart wounded* within him. With *strong cries and tears*, and with a deep abhorrence of HIMSELF and SIN, not easy to be expressed, he made supplication to his God; until GOD, ever mindful of his promise made to the *returning* sinner, answered him *in the joy of his heart*.—His time was now short, but every hour of it was crowded with the most *grateful returns* for the mercy he had received. He had *much* forgiven, and *therefore* loved the more.—His *works* fully justified his faith, and bore witness for him, that he was *born of GOD*.—He gave *convincing proofs* of the most humble (why may I not say, *cheerful*?) resignation to the fate.

which he had so *justly merited*; and of that love, and faith, and steady patience, with which it pleased God so mercifully to arm his breast. —Far from meeting his fate with an *apparent unconcern—he rejoiced with trembling.*—His prayers, and tears, and earnest *monitory* addresses to the surrounding multitude, in his way to execution, bespoke the solemn awe which rested on his soul; as also, the praises, which he so affectionately poured forth to *him that had loved him, and washed him in his blood*, gave comfortable testimony of a *good hope* THROUGH GRACE.—It is allowed, that public executions should be *strikingly awful*, and BRITAIN always wished to maintain such a conduct, as might contribute to make *his* so.—How far he supported such a conduct let his solemn, earnest, repeated admonitions, at the fatal tree, to old and young; his pointing out to them the steps, by which he had brought *himself* to ruin; his affectionate and pressing invitations to them all to turn to GOD; his fervent addresses to heaven; the tears and prayers of the many thousands who attended the execution, together with that deep, expressive seriousness and awe, which sat on every face:—I say, let this testify.

If any poor prodigal shall be encouraged to return to GOD, by reading this account of BRITAIN, a most valuable end is answered.—If any sinner shall think himself at liberty to

continue



continue in sin, that grace may abound.—I would solemnly remind such an one of what DAWSON, otherwise USHER, who was executed here not many years since, said to his fellow prisoners, as he was going to suffer, “Make good use,” said he, “of your time, and of the means of grace, which you now enjoy; for if you don’t, from my own experience I can assure you, the time will come, when you may wish to repent, but will not be able.”

(And GOD hath said, *Prov. 1, 24, &c. Because I have called and ye have refused, ye have set at nought my counsel, and would none of my reproof; I also will laugh at your calamity, and mock when your fear cometh, when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction as a whirlwind, when distress and anguish come upon you. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer, they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me; because they hated knowledge, and did not chuse the fear of the Lord.*)

His end was dreadful, a melancholy proof, amongst many others, that it is by no means true (as some have said) that the greater sinner a man is, the more likely it is that he will be a saint at death, or that the gallows is the safest way to heaven.—Sinner, be afraid! *God is not mocked. That which thou sowest, thou shalt surely reap.*—

Art thou the man? Hast thou wrought iniquity as thou couldst? Hast thou lived without God in the world?—I dare not say, that there is *no hope*, that there is *no place for repentance*. GOD forbid!

bid! The voice of JESUS is the voice of LOVE. "*Return unto me, for I have redeemed thee.*" *Repentance and remission of sins are preached in his name.*—To-day then hear his voice. And that thou mayst know the things which make for thy peace, before they are eternally hid from thine eyes, is the most earnest prayer of,

Thy soul's well-wisher,

JAMES ROUQUET.

BRISTOL, June 15, 1772.

SOME PARTICULARS
OF THE
L I F E and D E A T H

O F

Jonathan Britain, &c.

JONATHAN BRITAIN was born in Yorkshire, in the year 1749, of honest parents, who being unable to support him, he was obliged to attend the plow to earn his bread at the age of thirteen. In this service his right arm received some injury, which occasioned his friends to put him to school, that he might be fitted for some easier employment. He learnt to read the testament, and was taught something of writing and figures. Such were the rudiments of his education, which were greatly improved afterwards by his own application; especially his knowledge of the mathematics.

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At seventeen years of age he went to *York*, where he was hired to take care of an horse by an attorney; who discovering his superior talents, took him as a clerk. After this he was head usher to a school, where he taught the mathematics; but he did not long remain in this sphere, a mind like his was too unstable to fix any where. His choice was the army, accordingly he enlisted into the 10th regiment of dragoons, where his engaging behaviour and many accomplishments soon procured him the esteem of the officers; which prompted his natural ambition to emulate the pleasurable vices he saw in superior stations; these he found could not be enjoyed without money. To surmount this difficulty he determined on various illegal methods, which he soon reduced to practice. He committed many frauds bordering on forgeries: some of his schemes were very artful. He would insinuate himself into the company and acquaintance of unsuspecting persons, and become acquainted with their circumstances and connections, of which he would avail himself upon his removal. He would often put a small sum into the hands of a banker or reputable tradesman, and draw upon them for it; these bills being honoured, he would draw upon them afterwards for twice the sum in their hands. In all these tricks he had no accomplice. Understanding that Mr. *Peachy* had some business to be transacted by
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an attorney, *Britain* was employed by him in that character, and carried on the farce by producing letters from his pretended agent, an eminent attorney in London. These letters were all forged by himself, and made to bear the post mark by a letter press, which he always carried with him, by this means he defrauded Mr. *Peachy* of 40*l*. But all his schemes, artful as they were, and successfully executed, could not support his extravagancies.

In 1770, being reduced to the lowest circumstances, he applied to the master of the mathematical academy in Bristol for employment, who had no occasion for additional help at that time : *Britain* acquainted him with his distress, which was not more readily relieved by the one, than gratefully acknowledged by the other ; as *Britain's* tears amply testified. He earnestly renewed his application to be employed, and desired no other requital than his board ; his importunities prevailed, and his services were rewarded, not only by complying with his own proposals, but with an handsome addition of money. His attention to business, and remarkable dispatch of it, gave great satisfaction to his worthy employer ; who at length recommended him as a surveyor to a gentleman going to the West Indies, which however did not take place, as his wife

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is supposed to have dissuaded him from signing the agreement.

Soon after this he enlisted, though a deserter, into two different regiments in one day, clearing himself from the first with the money he received from the last, and was freed from that also by a gentleman's paying a guinea. After he left Mr. *Donn*, he was assistant to Mr. *Robinson*, schoolmaster, but leaving him very shortly, he was employed by Mr. *Jefferis*, of *Wrington*, surveyor of land. In this capacity, or many others, he might have acquired a genteel income, but his dissipations rendered his gains inadequate to his wants; which he unhappily attempted to relieve by forgeries.

Having put off several false drafts in *Bristol*, he began to expect the consequences; to avoid them he removed to *London*, and wrote several treasonable letters against the King, as preparatory to his future design of owning himself a principal accomplice in setting fire to *Portsmouth-Dock-Yard*; which he soon did in a letter to the L. M. of *London*, offering to surrender himself and discover his accomplices, provided his Majesty would publish his pardon in the Gazette. By the publication of the pardon he hoped to be indemnified for his forgeries, frauds, &c.

His wife going up to *London* he came down to *Reading* to meet her, where he was taken into custody the same night for offering four false

false drafts for acceptance. While he remained in *Reading* goal, he was continually employed in contriving that ingenious story relating to *Portsmouth* fire, &c. The plausibility of his account confirmed many *discerning* persons in the belief of it. From *Reading* he was removed to *Bristol*, to his no small consolation; where an happy difference of treatment produced every desirable alteration in his behaviour as a prisoner. And he would often thank God for those little compassionate indulgencies which unfortunate persons experience in *Newgate*. Several gentlemen soon found access to him, and from a laudable desire to prove his declarations, true or false, exerted themselves with unwearied patience under frequent disappointments, and though they found at last that they had been imposed upon, yet, (to the honor of their *humanity* be it spoken) they suffered no kind of resentment to interrupt their usual kindness to him.

When he was first arraigned he refused to plead to the indictment, urging that the pardon which was published in the *Gazette*, acquitted him from all offences whatever. The *integrity* and *humanity* of the RECORDER did him singular honor, by patiently attending to all he said, and by giving him exceeding proper advice, which however did not conquer his obstinacy, for he still refused to plead. Two days after he was called to the bar again, and pleaded

to the charge, was found guilty, and sentence d accordingly. The whole of his behaviour in court, was very unbecoming a man in his situation, and can be looked upon only as the effect of a mind lost to all hope, yet scorns to sink beneath the gloomy pressure.

When I found he was condemned, in a very miserable state of mind, I address'd the following letter to him.

Mr. Britain,

I am perswaded you will not impute the sincerest prayers, and endeavours for your eternal happiness to impertinence, I have no doubt you will seriously reflect upon those things, which I heartily recommend to your deep consideration. You may assure yourself, that these pages contain nothing *upbraiding*. ~ I shall address you with that decent plainness, which is suitable to your condition.

You have now passed your trial, and every chance for life is over.—Your sentence is to die—To *die*! O my God how *soon*!—In three short weeks you must bid adieu to this life, amidst the solemnities of a *public* execution. Then the secrets of the invisible world will be made known to you, and you must commence an existence in *everlasting* and inconceivable torments, or eternal glory.—May JESUS grant the latter to be yours!

You are sensible Mr. *Britain* that there is a God, and that he will arraign you at his tribunal, for all your sins against him; and that
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there will be no possibility of escaping this demerit if you depart hence without obtaining *mercy*. Let this *one thing* engage your attention day and night. I beseech you to try the tender mercies of JESUS CHRIST, to pray for it with earnestness and constancy. Sure no one needs it more than *you*!—You have brought upon yourself the abhorrence of your fellow creatures, and procured a scandalous death!—You are laden with fetters, immured in prison, and left to all the bitterness of reflection! But what is yet infinitely worse, you have lifted your heel against GOD, and provoked his wrath against you; and into the hands of this *living* GOD you must shortly fall!—Your crimes are *many*, and *heinous* against GOD and man—Your poor soul is deeply crimsoned with your sins, and your heart, I hope, sinks within you!—Ah poor unhappy *Britain*!—See your sad condition; your fate generally unpitied—Your soul exposed to endless misery!—What will or can you do?

Suffer me to speak to you of JESUS. He alone can help you—He is the friend of all distressed and miserable sinners, and to his arms the *worst* are welcome, if they come with *true hearts*, and *sincere repentance*. He can pardon all your sins in a moment, and give you an happy passage to the other world. Many a poor sinner has the blessed JESUS received from the gallows into glory.—Come then poor *Britain*, tho' you do not deserve the least degree of mercy
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do not despair; He saves to the uttermost *all* who come to GOD through Him. O bless the Lord, that you are not yet out of the reach of mercy!

But here let me caution you. Mercy will not be obtained, if you do not seek after it. The means are prayer, reading and hearing GOD's holy word, and conversing with godly people. As to the first, which you know is an act of the soul exerting herself in strong desires, you must beg of God to give you the true spirit of it, that you may be able to ask in *faith*, nothing doubting.—As to his blessed word, meditate therein continually, especially the 51 Psal. and the 23 of St. Luke. And O that CHRIST JESUS may bless it to thy poor soul! And let me advise you to keep yourself from *idle* company, be as much *alone* as possible, converse about nothing that does not concern your *better* part. Think how *short* your time is, consider the important business you *should* be engaged in, and set about it in the *fear* of GOD, and with a *firm* resolution: And as the strongest motive to all this ponder upon *eternity*, think of its *duration*!—May its miseries alarm your fears and diligence, and its glories excite your desires.

With most ardent prayers for your salvation,
I remain your soul's well wisher, &c.

When he received this letter he immediately wrote the following note.

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"I am determined to have nothing to do with any of your *faith*. I know you not. I would have you visit my fellow sufferers, you may be of use to *them*." But before this reached me, I received the following letter.

Sir,

"Sorry am I to think I rejected you (God's servant) this morning. My soul is troubled, my spirits fail, my conscience tells me *I have done amiss*; Oh! for CHRIST's sake forgive my stubbornness, forget my naughty answer, and come and administer comfort to a poor afflicted soul, whose appearance must be before the LORD in a short time. My case is desperate, my time is short and my sins are many, many indeed! The grief and horrors of a poor afflicted soul are not easily conceived. Every kind word of worldly friends, and every temporal advantage seem only to increase my misery. Your compliance with my request will, I hope, through the blessing of God, afford me some relief.

I am, Sir,

Your very humble and distressed servant,

Newgate, JONATHAN BRITAIN."

Monday, 2 o'clock.

When I received this letter I went to him immediately expecting to find an object disposed to receive every gracious impression the LORD JESUS is disposed to communicate to the *broken hearted*.

hearted. He received me with decency and respect, but told me he was sorry he had given me the trouble to call upon him, as he was determined to abide in *the faith* of the church of *Rome*. He said he thought the *Protestants* were egregious enthusiasts, and therefore unsafe divines:—that as they allowed themselves in errors far greater than those they opposed in the *Catholics*, he thought himself justified in his adherence to *Popery*.—I discerned the distress and perplexity of his mind, and hinted to him that I was no stranger to his feelings. I told him I should think myself happy if he would state his objections, that I might have an opportunity of answering them separately, as I could not doubt but he would yield to the force of *reason* and *revelation*. He thanked me for my obliging offer, but as he was resolved to pursue his own scheme (as he called it) he would not give me that trouble. I begged he would let me know what his scheme was. He said *morality*: I begged to be heard a few words upon that subject. I observed to him, that the nature of morality was totally mistaken by him: that it did not *merely* respect our outward behaviour, which he could not but know from his own experience, might often be applauded, when the motives were truly detestable:—that though hypocrisy and ostentation frequently pass among men for true morality, yet God cannot be so deceived, as he “ requires truth
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in the inward parts:”—That his scheme could by no means advantage him, as his time was abundantly too short to form himself to the first habits of morality, and that even supposing he strictly observed every external religious duty, yet that would not atone for his innumerable offences in past life, nor purify his heart from an inclination to his besetting evils.—I begged him to consider that expression of our blessed Saviour, “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”—I urged him to recollect the import of the phrase “Born again;” and as an help to it, I informed him of the difference between the *old* and the *new* man, the flesh and the spirit. That the members of the *former* are, “Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murder, drunkenness, revellings, and such like.” Gal. 5. From this view of the two states he was left to judge whether the *philosophy* which men ignorantly teach and vainly boast, could effect the destruction of the *old* man, and the birth of the *new*.

I pressed upon him the *necessity of repentance*, and the impossibility of enjoying the peace of God here, or his presence hereafter, without it.—I explained to him “The new and living way;” the methods that must be taken to get into it, and the encouragement God has given to us to attempt it; as “Whosoever

cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out.”
 “ Seek and ye shall find, ask and it shall be given you.” &c.—Against this he urged many objections; that the process was painful; that he was near distraction whenever he thought upon it; that prayer added to his misery, as it constantly occasioned the most bitter recollection of his past sins; and therefore he desired I would leave him to pursue his own inclination, and adhere to the doctrines of popery.—I begged him to consider well what he determined, adding that, as I had no wish but his happiness, I should rejoice to see him die a *good Papist*; and if that was his determination, I would have him send for a Priest, who might help his devotions, and seasonably advise him.—Upon this he asked me with great earnestness if I was sincere. If I was, why did I protest against that communion?—I told him, I should be glad to be excused from any altercations upon the subject, as I thought it an improper manner of entertaining *him*. He replied, not so sir.—I apprehend, you and I differ essentially.—I abide by the necessity of invoking saints, and I believe in a purgatory—To both of which you object, but without the least shadow of reason; for though you do not pray to departed saints, you very absurdly solicit the prayers of each other, though you are neither so wise or holy as those blessed spirits. And your opposition to purgatory,

tory, lessens the divine mercy, and contradicts that passage of holy writ, in the 1. of St. Pet.

3. 19.—I should be glad to hear what you have to object to each of these particulars.—

I observed to him, that when we pray for each other, we comply with that exhortation of St. Paul, 1. Tim. 2. 1. “ I exhort that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men :” but that we do not assume the character of mediators in so doing, well knowing that there is but *one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.*

1. Tim. 2. 5.—That the discharge of this duty is highly reasonable, as it speaks that pity and love which one sinner bears towards another, and as it has the greatest tendency to make us love and bear with each other.—But though we pray for others, we cannot advantage them without the concurrence of their own supplications; therefore those are foolish and abominably wicked who say, “ We have the prayers of the righteous, and they shall avail for us.”

You see now that this duty properly explained, is consistent with reason, and the authority of scripture; whereas the addresses that are made to departed saints, are hazardous and idolatrous—They are *hazardous*, as departed saints may be in some region distant from our atmosphere; or if it could be ascertained that they are conversant with mortals, yet they cannot every where be attentive to the petitions

tions which are recommended to them, unless we admit of their *ubiquity*, and then we commence pagans, by admitting a plurality of *Gods*, since *omnipresence* is an attribute essential to the divine nature, and can be possessed by no other being. Add to all this, that the scriptures altogether discountenance it, and direct us to trust only in the LORD.—But for your farther conviction, enquire by whose mediation the first sinner was admitted into glory? Surely through *him only*, “who ever liveth to make intercession for us.” It is therefore much safer to trust in *his* power and goodness, who is *the same yesterday, to day, and forever*, than to rely on the mediation of those, who have obtained their inheritance through the merits of this *One mediator between God and man*. Your notions of purgatory are altogether *unscriptural*, as the very text you bring in proof of it shall evince. St. *Peter* is there speaking of the *spirit*, which quickened or raised *JESUS* from the dead, and assures us that by the same spirit he went in the days of *Noah*, long before he assumed our nature, and preached unto the spirits in prison; meaning either the spirits imprisoned in the body, or fast bound in trespasses and sins, (phrases with which the scriptures abound.)—That this must be the true sense of the text will appear quite clear when we recollect, that in the day of judgment we are to be tried for the deeds done *in the body*, consequently when the spirit returns to
God,

GOD, every thing remains *fixed* till the great reunion, when the final sentence will be given, according to the deeds done *in the body* whether good or evil.—Now though I oppose the notion of a *purgatory*, I admit of an intermediate state; and I believe that happy spirits in that state are maturing for the consummation of glory. But this cannot afford you any benefit, if you quit this world without the necessary qualifications for an admission into it, I mean the *pardon* and the *peace* of GOD.—After this conversation I offered to pray with him, which he consented to with some reluctance.

At his earnest request, I repeated my visit the next morning, and was happy to find him considerably more calm than the preceeding evening—He told me that notwithstanding his determination when I left him in the evening, he could not help singing several hymns with those who were under sentence of death. The hymns, he said, had no effect on him, while others were constrained to weep: this circumstance however wrought powerfully upon him as he lay upon his bed: he could not help exclaiming against himself as the most hardened of sinners; and pursuing his reflections he was unable to refrain from prayer; these things tended greatly to convince him, that JESUS has all power in heaven and earth.

He expressed his concern for troubling me with many little remarks &c. which I do not

not think necessary to mention here. We conversed in a general way at this time, as I was fearful his mind was not altogether fit to receive any thing pointed.—In the afternoon I saw him again. His mind was very seriously impressed, and his whole manner invited me to speak freely to him of the things which concerned his salvation: I was particularly careful to encourage those relentings, by shewing him the necessity and use of them, which he was greatly attentive to.—He remarked to me, how happy he found himself in conversing about these important things. A few hours after I returned to him again, to ask him if he had any desire to see the Romish priest, as it had been intimated he had, he told me he should be glad to see him once, if it would not prevent my visits, and could be granted him. I told him I would answer for his seeing him, and then left him.

The next morning I went to see him early, as my fears had suggested to me that he wanted *absolution* from the priest, the fatal consequences of which I endeavoured to prevent, by dissuading him from so dangerous a farce. I entreated him seriously to consider the matter.—He desired me to explain that text, *John xx. 23.* “Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained.”—I reminded him
that

that the *apostles* were commanded to preach remission of sins to those, who *repent*, and *believe* in CHRIST JESUS;—and that this remission of sins was and is a consequence of *repenting*, and *believing* in JESUS, and not the effect of a partial and indiscriminate act of the *apostles*. In this sense, and no other, they remitted sins; for no one instance can be produced of their absolving the impenitent and unbelieving. They were said to *retain* sins, when those, to whom they preached CHRIST, did neither repent or believe; so ran the tenor of their commission.—“Go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature, he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned,” *Mark* 16.—But as this was not quite satisfactory to him, I observed, that if I admitted what he so strongly insisted upon, viz. that the *apostles* had an unlimited power to bestow pardon whenever and on whomsoever they pleased, yet that would not, at least ought not to satisfy him that his priest was invested with the like power, till he gave extraordinary proofs to corroborate the truth of his having so extraordinary a mission. I asked him by what criterion he would be ascertained of his pardon; for if every thing should continue in the same, or in a worse state after his absolution, he would have reason to suspect the deception.—I spoke

spoke closely to him of the great insult he was about to offer to ALMIGHTY GOD, whose *prerogative alone* it is to pardon sinners. I added how absurd it must be for one sinner to pardon the offences of another, committed against an *infinitely holy* GOD. I begged him no longer to be deluded by the refined, but foolish notion of a priest's being holy by *office*, though, as a man, sinful as others. He ingenuously confessed that my observations were weighty, but such was his prejudice that he could not yield to them. As soon as I left him, the priest was introduced in the presence of the Deputy-keeper of the prison,—the interview was short. But an appointment was made for the *great business* the following Monday.

Next day, Friday, when I was with Mr. Britain, I perceived his mind much disturbed: I took occasion to describe to him the manner of the *Holy spirit's* operating upon the human heart, and how he might be certified of it. I entered very minutely into his case, and shewed him how GOD had wrought upon him and his design in doing so. He said he could not but confess, as I had so clearly described the state of his mind, that he was satisfied with all I observed upon the subject.—So fair an opportunity was not to be neglected, to caution him in the most solemn manner against quenching the good *Spirit* of GOD. But that the caution might be effectual, it was necessary to shew him

him the different ways by which the *Spirit* may be quenched; I shall only mention that which I think was most pertinent to his case. I told him, that to act contrary to his reason and to the directions of GOD's word was to prefer his own way before the ALMIGHTY's, and that this must be attended with the departure of his *Spirit* from him; that in consequence of this his heart would lose those contrite impressions, become a stranger to holy desires, grow insensibly callous, and his whole soul become a region of darkness. With this observation I left him.

The next morning, Saturday, I found it had proved too great a truth to him; for if I may use the expression, he was as miserable as a devil. He was regardless of every thing I said, and declared that he would not attend to any thing that concerned his soul till the Monday following, when he intended to get absolution. I expressed my sorrow for his unhappy resolution, and begged him to apply himself to heaven with earnestness, seeing that he had but six or seven days to live. I encouraged him to trust in the divine mercy, and to pour out his heart to JESUS, whenever he felt his mind invaded by any temptation: however he seemed but little altered, and continued in the same disposition all that day.

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On Sunday morning I found him much changed.—He addressed me in a manner that I had never observed before, his countenance was expressive of the solemn impressions which were made on his heart, he spoke of the grace he had received, and acknowledged the divine goodness towards him with great gratitude. He said his heart was so filled with the spirit of prayer, that he could scarce contain himself, frequently begging God to preserve him from falling. I observed, if what he said was true, he had great reason to bless the goodness of God, who in compassion to the short time he had to live, had so mercifully revisited him. I told him how impossible it was for him to obtain that *inward peace* he was in pursuit of, *if he regarded any iniquity in his heart*. I cautioned him in the most solemn manner against a relapse, lest “God should swear in his wrath, that he should never enter into his rest.”—On the other hand I told him he had every thing to hope, if he would *confess* and *forsake* his sins, since God declares, “Who so confesseth and forsaketh his sins shall have mercy, *Prov. xxviii. 13.*—“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness,” *1 John i. 9.* I entreated him to recollect the misery he endured the two preceeding days, and to be careful to avoid the cause, lest the effect should return with greater violence,

violence, and pursue him to the end.—I endeavoured to state his case in the most familiar manner, by supposing him to have laboured a long time under an intolerable complaint, which had defied the power of medicine, till one prescription began to produce every wished for change; that if in the mean time some physician should find fault with his medicine, and propose a better; whether in this case, he would not say, I reap every advantage from the medicine I use which can be expected from it, I am therefore resolved to persevere in the use of it. He rejoined, yes certainly.—Now then apply this to the matter in hand: ask yourself what religion is intended to do for us:—you will soon perceive its grand design is to restore us to the favour of God, which is our highest happiness. And this it does, by first making us sensible of our innumerable transgressions, and filling our hearts with contrition on account of them. This sense of misery will bring us on our knees before God, and extort groans from our heart and tears from our eyes;—to this distress God directs his attention, and delivers us out of all our trouble, and puts the oil of gladness into our soul. This is the design of religion. You will therefore enquire how far it has had this effect upon you, and if you perceive yourself in any measure a partaker of these blessings, you will determine accordingly whether it is

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right to take any other steps, however specious they may seem, than those which have produced such blessings.—Sir, said he, I see your design.—I am resolved, by the grace of God, to hold fast that which I have attained. With this happy resolution I left him.

The following morning I found he had refused to see the priest. When I came down to him he received me with great cordiality. I was astonished to see him so innocently chearful, and unaffectedly serious,—the contrast was obvious, though perfectly harmonious. In this happy temper he begged my congratulations on the near approaching epoch of his eternal felicity.—Next Friday, said he, will finish all.—His fortitude and chearfulness so astonished me, that I could scarcely credit what I heard; but his whole behaviour was so consistent, that it was impossible to doubt his sincerity; especially as he offered to satisfy me and the world concerning his affairs; which I greatly applauded, but advised him to defer it till the night before his execution, as I was fearful the deceived populace might have given place to their rage. Another reason was, I thought every confession* would come with a greater sanction the nearer his end approached. Whether in this I did rightly I will not attempt to say, sure I am I intended well.

He

* See his confession at the end.

He declared he was perfectly happy, as the *lying spirit* was now cast out of him; that at the time he resolved to give it up, his heart flew open to receive his REDEEMER, as the flood-gates to admit the mighty waters. From this time he began to count the hours he had to live. His time was spent in singing and prayer. In his address to God he would often confess how vile a sinner he was, and in the most simple and ardent manner beg forgiveness for the injuries he had done "to private families, and this poor nation." He acknowledged the justness of his sentence with thankfulness to God for it, as the means of bringing about so happy a change in him. He received the *Undertaker* to measure him for his coffin with courtesy and amazing fortitude. When it was brought to him, he viewed it with the same steadiness. He often desired to have it, that he might know whether the fears of death had really forsaken him or not. He expressed a wish to be indulged with a coach to the place of execution, which was applied for; but when he found it could not be granted, he said "Well, so best, I deserve no kindness to be shewn to me, and I have no doubt but God will support me if I am stoned all the way."

The day before he suffered, he received the holy communion with great decency and devotion. He constantly exclaimed against himself as the chief of sinners. He professed to
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have the most firm confidence in God's mercy, and blessed God for the unspeakable gift of his dear SON, through whose merits *alone* he expected an admission into paradise. The last night being desired in the most pressing manner to take three or four hours rest, he replied no, God forbid!—I have spent many nights to the dishonor of God, and to the destruction of my soul, this night therefore I intend to devote to the service of God, in praising his goodness, and imploring his mercy.

About fifteen hours before he died, he gave the most surprizing proof of the *reality* of his change, by sustaining the most provoking and barbarous treatment, with the utmost patience, tranquility, and steadiness. And though the interview was not productive of that mutual affection *he* so ardently wished, nevertheless on his own part he was greatly satisfied, and frequently declared how sincerely he forgave the man.

Soon after this a respite was brought for the person who was to have suffered with him, and with whom *Britain* had taken great pains, and often expressed the most tender concern at the unhappy state of his mind: when he heard of it, the joy of his countenance bore testimony to the truth of his declaration, viz, that he rejoiced on poor *Osborne's* account, and if

if the respite had been for *either*, he would have given it in favour of *Osborne*, as he was certain that he himself should never be more fit to die than at that time. About one in the morning I left him employed agreeable to his wishes; and at eight the same morning I was with him again. As soon as he saw me he cried out "Ah sir! I have had a dreadful struggle indeed—fiery darts in abundance have been cast at me—nature was almost overpowered, but ever blessed be God it is over and my peace is restored."—After he had taken an affectionate farewell of his fellow prisoners, he returned to his friends with whom he sang hymns, and poured out his heart to God in the most passionate and affecting manner.

The time drawing near for his departure he reminded them of it, and went into the parlour to prepare for it. He received the executioner very kindly, and gave him some particular directions concerning his duty. He put on the halter himself, saying he never put on a neckcloth with so much pleasure. After he was hand-cuffed he approached the glass, and viewing himself with becoming attention, he said, "*Britain* thou wast never so happily arrayed in all thy life." He then took leave of some particular friends, and ascended the cart, accompanied by the Rev. Ordinary and myself. Nothing could afford greater cause for astonishment

nishment to all who saw him than his behaviour. When he passed the Council-house he paid a respectful compliment to the magistrates, and employed himself from thence to the gallows in singing and praying. Two or three times on the way he complained of struggles similar to that he felt in the morning, but far less severe. At these seasons he would steadfastly look towards heaven, and cry out, "O my blessed JESUS, hast thou brought me hitherto, and wilt thou not carry me safely thro' my hour of tribulation?—O my JESUS, leave me not in my last moments!"—Scarcely were his ejaculations ended, before the radiance of the SUN of RIGHTEOUSNESS would fill his soul; then he would express his confidence in the divine mercy, and sing for very joy.—When he came under the gallows he beheld it with delight; and seeing the tears streaming from the eyes of the spectators, he cried out, "Weep not for me, but rejoice; for I assure you there is not one of you all with whom I would change situations, were it in my power."—The worthy clergyman who attended him addressed the populace, at Mr. *Britain's* request, in a very pertinent manner; poor *Britain* confirming what was said, especially every thing that tended to expose himself as base and wicked; and himself closed the address to the multitude with a suitable exhortation, the substance of which was, "Let the righteous rejoice,—let sinners take warning,

ing, young and old, the *young* especially.— See what sin has done for poor *Britain*! And see in me what God can do for sinners! Let this encourage you to *turn to him*." After this he joined in prayer with great fervor, and for the last time sang his favourite hymn.

When I left him I urged him in a very pressing manner, to tell me if he had no fears or doubts of his happiness, in so near and awful a view of *death*. He assured me in a modest, chearful manner, that he had none, but was perfectly happy. He addressed himself to his last moments in ardent and pathetic prayer to ALMIGHTY GOD, thanking him for the *mode* of his death, as the means of bringing about the happy change which he experienced; then clasping his hands together, he gave the signal, and launched into the world of spirits saying, "LORD JESUS, receive my spirit, for thou knowest I have faith in thy blood!"

Thus happily ended the days of a man, whose misapplied talents laid the foundation of his ruin.— He was a fine figure, extremely volatile, resolute and vain. His genius was romantic, perspicuous, penetrating and inventive. He was addicted to drunkenness and debauchery, and was a perfect stranger to truth; but he possessed no small degree of generosity and affability, the one he abused to

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his own ruin, and the other to the injury of many.

In poor *Britain* we eminently see the dreadful consequences of departing from the *inspeaking* voice of GOD, and that *holy fear* which operates on every human mind as an informer of approaching danger, and if duly attended to would conduct us clear of it; whereas our inattention to its instructions inevitably plunges us into misery. How then does it behove us to regard that weighty sentiment, founded on observation and experience, “The *fear* of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom.”—The more knowledge therefore which any man has without this fear, the greater fool he is. For the *fear* of the LORD, where it is yielded to, will ever be followed by the *favour* of the LORD, which is heaven. But the wisdom of the world, imperfect in its nature and short in its duration, is most pernicious to the soul, inasmuch as it prevents her from that holy adoration, and humble supplication which the *fear* of the LORD genders and encourages. When this holy principle is disregarded, the dread of doing amiss, and the consciousness of GOD’s *omnipresence* presently forsake us, and the flood-gates of iniquity fly open upon us. O that men were wise, that they understood this!—Then this gracious monitor which speaks almost before our reason opens, would be sacredly obeyed; in consequence of this it

would

would grow proportionable with our years, and effectually guard us from the inroads of vice and all its fatal effects, which we too seldom regard, 'till we sink beneath the oppressive weight.

Bad *example* and the want of, or a disregard to, moral instructions, cannot fail to expose any disposition to the impressions of iniquity. Happy would it be for us, if every appearance of evil was obscured from our view!—Far happier were we uninstructed in the works of darkness!—But alas! How often are we ruined, without design, by receiving the approbation and applause of our parents and others, when the rod or reproof should have corrected our errors. How much have *such* silly barbarous parents, guardians, &c. to answer for!—Surely nothing can more betray our ignorance of the world, our want of *good* policy, and our utter contempt of God, than that early disregard to *religion*, which we encourage in *youth*. By this means we unite our forces with *hell*, and labour to promote the everlasting destruction of our own offspring. Horrid reflection!—Can such damnable measures be pursued by human-kind?—To what other cause can we, in general, impute the numerous executions every year? *This* one evil has brought numbers to an untimely, and shameful end; who, had they been properly managed, under the blessing of heaven, would have

have done honor to religion, have been ornaments to their families, and blessings to society.

Let parents and others seriously consider the innumerable evils they are exposing their children to, and the insupportable miseries they are bringing upon themselves, by neglecting to form their tender minds by a religious education. For if we are not careful to exert our authority in discountenancing *impiety*, and in preventing *extravagance*, we virtually hurry them into every abandoned course, which, when engaged in, must be supported at all hazards. I am sensible 'tis the *prerogative* of GOD only to change the hearts and subdue the will; but still 'tis *our duty* to encourage them in the *fear* and *love* of GOD, as the most likely means to conquer the will, however stubborn, and to renovate the heart however bad. If after using these and other prudent methods, we perceive no good effect, we secure ourselves from the clamorous upbraidings of our CONSCIENCE, and prevent those *bitter reflections*, which otherwise will pursue us.

I will now address myself particularly to those, who have ventured upon the frontiers of *Satan's* dominions, either through the want of a pious education, or in defiance of every thing truly sacred.—You are yet but infants in iniquity.—You tremble with black apprehensions,

hensions, and in the midst of your folly stand appaled.—You cannot applaud your actions *with a grace*. Nay, you wish them to be unknown, at least to your relations and friends. Frequently, after your debauches, you loathe yourselves, and determine to renounce your companions and courses together. Happy resolve!—Pursue it while it is practicable. Another step in the ways of darkness may extinguish your light, and cut off your retreat. Therefore *instantly* return like the *prodigal*, take up his language, seek the pardon of your heavenly father, and rigidly abide by his commands. Thus sheltered under the shadow of the ALMIGHTY'S wing, your future days shall know none of those desponding horrors which haunt the guilty; but heavenly peace and holy joy will fill your hearts, while you implore the divine grace, to enable you to form your lives agreeable to the will of God.

There are others who may be called adults, these glory in their shame, and drink in iniquity with greediness. They give up the reins to their impetuous passions, and drive headlong to perdition.—Repeated disappointments instead of detaining them one moment to consider the deceitfulness of sin, stimulate their lust, and quicken them in the pursuit of the same phantoms; by this means they penetrate too far into the enemy's country to make good a retreat, and fall miserable victims to their
own

own folly. Unhappy creatures ! Consider the ways of sin, and gather wisdom from the destruction of others, so that iniquity prove not your destruction. How many who are no more on earth, date the era of their ruin from their compliance with the first allurements of pleasure. She presented them with objects that soon fired their bosoms with impure desires, and these desires not properly resisted, ended in actual gratification : and the repetition of these lewd indulgences made *company* desirable ; company made way for drunkenness, public amusements, and gaming. These brought on expences, debts and poverty. Frauds, forgeries and robberies, followed as auxiliaries, till at length infamy and the gallows closed the scene. Thus have many proceeded from step to step, from whose circumstances, understanding, and connections, better things were expected. But alas *ruin* is the certain consequence of sin, as every subject of it will one way or other, sooner or later experience. Therefore suffer yourselves to reflect a little ! —If every wish for your own welfare has forsaken you, have ye no parents, no friends to be tortured by your imprudence, and rendered inconsolable by that destruction of body and soul, which you are bringing upon yourselves?—Pray spare them !—Consider what you are doing, and the unavoidable consequences of such a conduct. Your boon companions will
desert

desert you when *shame* and *justice* seize you—
 The courses you are taking cannot last long—
 and suppose you should escape the gallows,
 how will you escape the *vengeance* of HEAVEN?
 In the *hour* of DEATH, and in the *day* of
 JUDGMENT, how will you support the burthen
 of complicated guilt? How will ye face your
 ALMIGHTY JUDGE, whose eye has traced you
 in the silent darkness of the night, and been
 privy to all your sins?—How will ye endure
 the *everlasting burnings*?—Be assured your
 master will deceive you, even though you
 possess the invention and abilities of *Britain*.
 Has not experience already made you sensi-
 ble, that there is no peace to the wicked!
 What madness, to persist in that black and
 thorny way!—Drop the pursuit, try a few
 weeks at least, whether the *wise man's* account
 is true. He says, the ways of wisdom (godli-
 ness) are ways of pleasantness, and all her
 paths are peace. Taste and see how good the
 LORD is to them that seek him; and rush not
 upon the thick bosses of his buckler, for who
 shall stand before him when his wrath is kind-
 led, yea but a little!—Lay down your arms
 of rebellion, i. e. cease to do evil, put away
 your sins—cast yourselves at his feet, cry
 aloud for mercy, and persevere in your peti-
 tion; so shall your sins be blotted out, and
 heaven be opened in your heart.

I would close these pages, by reminding
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the *reader* that however he may thank God, and applaud himself that he is not such a one as *Britain* was, yet his future state will be far less desirable, unless like *him*, he humble himself under the mighty hand of God, and feelingly adopt *his* and the *publican's* petition, "God be merciful unto me a sinner." For however *we* may distinguish between great and little sinners, the least of sinners must be found guilty at that great tribunal, if his sins are not repented of, and pardoned before he goes hence to be no more seen.—Let us therefore one and all, speedily apply ourselves to the important work of *repentance*, that we may taste the felicity of DAVID's happy man, whose sin is pardoned.

THE following is a true and perfect copy of the confession of *Jonathan Britain*, the evening before his execution, in the gaol of Newgate, *Bristol*; at the said *Jonathan Britain's* own request, and by him dictated, and carefully taken down in writing by *Thomas Lawrence* and *Henry Burgum*, in the presence of *Mr. Arthur Sandall* and *Mr. Thomas Janes*, May 14, 1772, who all upon their oaths have proved the authenticity of the same.

“ I declare now, that I know no more about the fire at *Portsmouth*, than any person whatsoever; 'tis true, I was apprehensive, that I might be detected for some one or more of the several cheats and forgeries committed by me, on this account I wrote several treasonable letters to the King.—I followed his Majesty from St. James's to Buckingham-house, intruding myself close upon him, on purpose to be observed by him, on account of the treasonable letters, which I kept copies of. I expected a reward would be offered, for the sake of which, I was prepared to swear any man's life away as the writer; though really wrote by myself. I, in fact, never meant to shoot or hurt the person of his Majesty. I never in my heart harboured so much as an intention towards it. True, I had a loaded pistol in my pocket at the time of my following him, which my fears dictated as a guard to me, and for no other purpose.—In *Reading*

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gaol

gaol I sent for the Gazette in which the pardon was printed: I applied for it to the Secretaries of State, the Under-Secretaries came down, and brought with them the treasonable letters, of which I produced copies.—That increased their suspicions.—I gave them directions to go and take up two of my pretended accomplices, which they endeavoured doubtless; but there were none such to be found. Now it was that repeated letters in print, and by the post, all of my own writing, came to me, offering me rewards, if I would hold my tongue, and what not. By these means the whole kingdom was alarmed.—The ministry slighted my information. Thus, therefore, I reasoned with myself, I shall now certainly be hanged, let the case be as it will. I will now try a deeper scheme; I will write against the ministry. I will accuse them and spread it through the nation; thousands will receive it as true, and who can tell, I thought, but some body or other may bail me out, and by that means I may save my life. I most unjustly accused Lord *Mansfield* of being a traitor to his King and country, in the *Whisperer* and other inflammatory papers; I falsely accused Lord *Halifax* of receiving bribes; and Lord *Faulconbridge*, being a Catholic, of harbouring one of the supposed parties concerned in the *Portsmouth* fire.—Now the papers and the public ran with it like wild fire from one to another, which made me more assiduous

assiduous in my studies; for every night and every day were my tongue and pen employed in villifying, traducing and defaming the ministry; and for this particular circumstance, their taking *Dudley* and bringing him to a public hearing, and not me, for the fire at *Portsmouth*. This confirmed and increased the suspicions of the public—and from that time to this the reality of it hath remained a matter of doubt.

Signed,
JONATHAN BRITAIN."

Witnesses,—THOMAS LAWRENCE,
HENRY BURGUM,
ARTHUR SANDALL,
THOMAS JANES.

Bris

Sworn before me this 15th of *May*. 1772.
HENRY BRIGHT, MAYOR.

E R R A T A.

Page 5. line 11. for And read So.—*ib.* l. 21. after dreadful read and.—p. 9. l. 6. for Letter press read Stamp.—p. 12. l. 5. for scorns read scorning.—*ib.* l. 7. after condemn'd read and.—*ib.* l. 11. for I am read As I am.—p. 13. l. 1. for this read their.—*ib.* l. 4. for to try read by.—p. 17. l. 21. after such like read Those of the *latter* are love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.—p. 36. l. 14. read heart.

and in my hands for every night and
every day was my constant and constant
willingness and having the ability
and for this particular circumstance, and
ing Daily and bringing him to a good res-
ing, and not me for the first time
This confirmed and increased the reputation of
the public and later in time to this date
of it I shall remain a matter of doubt



THOMAS
HENRY BRIDGE

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